

We need to talk about Kevin

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Before becoming the inescapable bane of Macaulay Culkin's life, Home Alone amassed \$476.7 million worth of worldwide ticket sales, guaranteeing the Christmas no. 1 slot in 1990. We rooted for the precocious eight-year-old, abandoned to the mercy of two malevolent burglars, whilst vicariously revelling in his first taste of freedom as his parents desperately tried to secure a flight back from their Paris vacation.



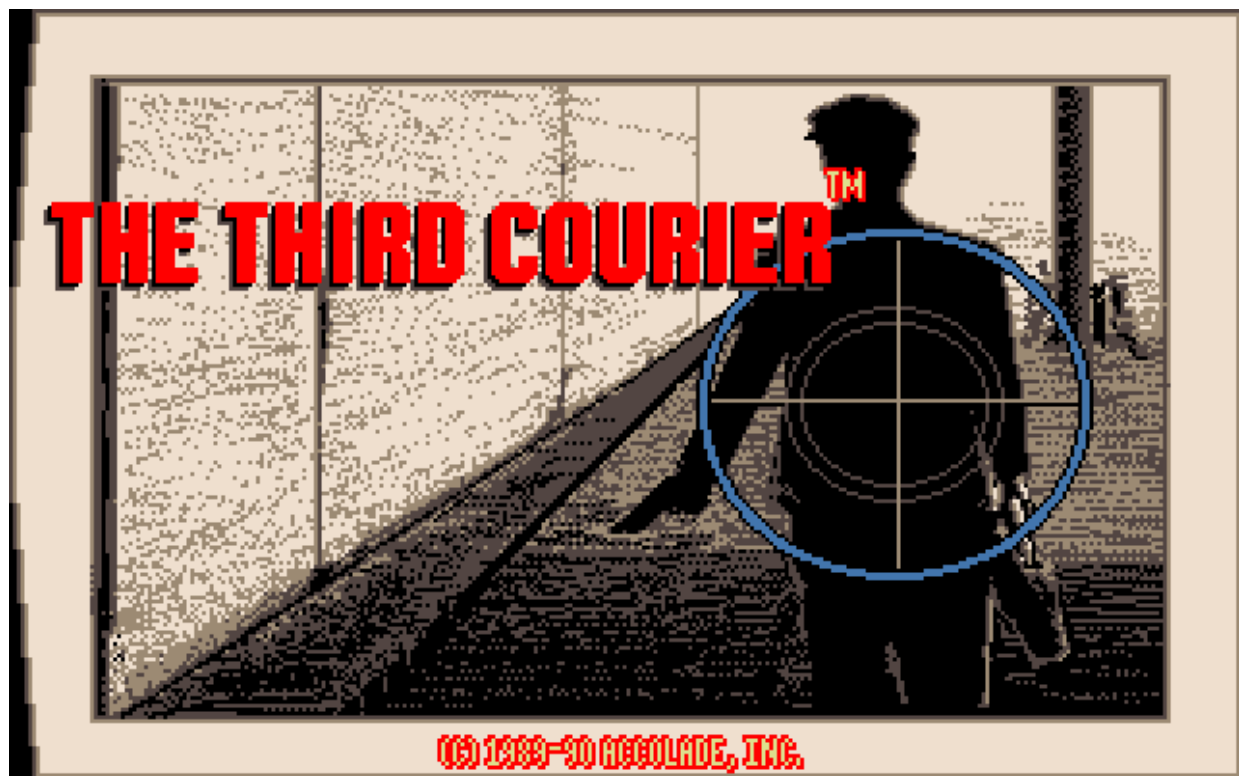
"It's background radiation at Christmastime. I've had people who want to sit down and watch it with me, which is both flattering and creepy."

**Macaulay Culkin, interview with Ellen DeGeneres
(23rd April 2018)**

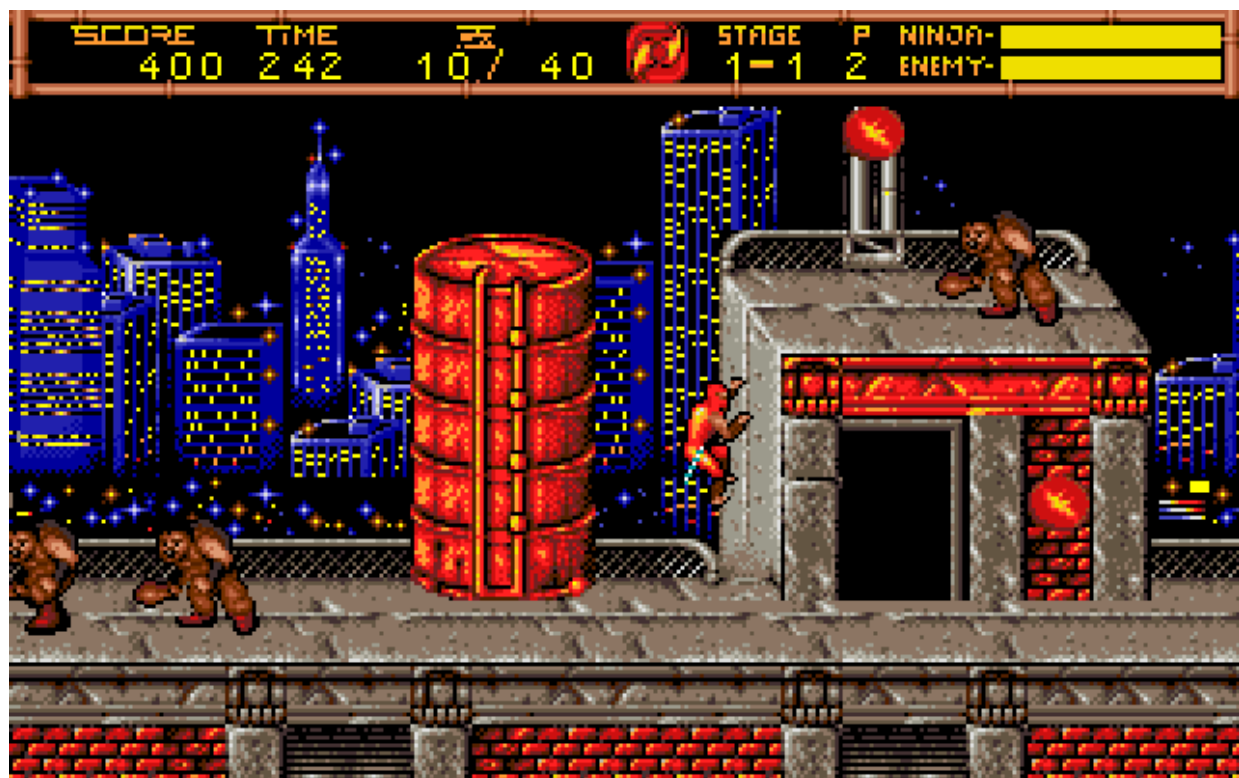


Given the off-the-scale blockbuster movie's reception at the box office, naturally, you'd expect Home Alone to garner similar attention from prospective games publishers. Obviously one of the major players would snap up the license, channel bucket-loads of moolah into the exploration of an original concept and produce a highly esteemed accompaniment that would still be revered today.

Hmm, not quite. Accolade were awarded the rights. So far so good, development funds wouldn't have been in short supply. Then they drafted in 'Manley & Associates' to take charge of the actual grunt work. Sounding more like a team of solicitors, this was the outfit who - the previous year - brought us the little-known adventure game, 'The Third Courier'...



...two years later, 'Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos'...



...and nothing else as far as the Amiga was concerned. They were much better known for their DOS and Apple titles before being acquired by EA in 1996 and subsequently renamed Electronic Arts Seattle.



Originally released to theatres in November/December 1990, Accolade missed the publicity boat while at full tilt, instead aiming to capitalise on the wake left by the VHS release. In the US at least, Home Alone hit the video store shelves in August 1991, with the game following in November. At this stage, the sequel wasn't due to arrive via Santa's sleigh for another year, so there wasn't that momentum to keep the franchise in the public consciousness. Aside from being a tad on the mediocre side, I expect this would explain why the game only reached no. 69 in the sales charts in February 1992 (see Amiga Power). It put in another appearance the following month, falling to no. 87, before disappearing entirely.



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Before we get Lost in New York, however, let's take a look at Kevin McCallister's *homebound* adventure (Chicago if you're interested). It's a platform game of sorts, though not in the traditional sense in that the main objective is to protect your empty family residence from an impending invasion. A role-reversed re-interpretation of Pink Panther...



...or Cattivik you could say. Appropriate-ish I suppose since it allows me to inject a vaguely relevant bit of trivia here.



Rene Manzor - the writer and director of French horror-thriller, 3615 code Pere Noel - accused writer and producer of Home Alone, John Hughes, of plagiarising his movie. I can't imagine why the untranslated French forerunner wasn't equally popular with a catchy title like that. To summarise the case for and against the concept-reworking claim, Rene said, "you blinkin' well *did* nick me idea you idea-stealing toe-rag". John replied, "I never did, you he-hawing plonker" and they both got on with their lives. True story, hence the speech marks.



Speaking of true stories. Marv and Harry (the inept 'Wet Bandits' from the movie) have spied an opportunity to burgle the McCallister's mansion-sized abode - conveniently for us - at a very specific time. Breaking and entering at precisely 9.00 pm, we have just one hour to prepare our defences by laying a variety of bone-crunching traps. Actually, 60 minutes of in-game time equates to roughly 6 of our real-world earth minutes so there's none to waste if we're to be ready. Before the timer reaches zero we must have all our

deadly gadgets in place seeing as no more can be laid afterwards.



While there are 26 objects to find and weaponise, only three can be carried simultaneously, forcing us to traipse back and forth against the clock. These include brother Buzz's pet tarantula, roofing tar, Kevin's radio controlled car,

firecrackers, rollerskates, a soldering iron, grease gun, bowling ball, baseball bat, blowtorch and so on.



F1 instructs Kevin to pick up an object, F2 selects it from the inventory, while F3 deploys the trap. I wouldn't waste too long scratching your head trying to fathom out the optimum positions in which to place them since the big yellow 'here' indicators have this covered.



Once the burglars enter we must lure them towards our traps, remaining in view to ensure they're sufficiently distracted to stumble blindly into them. If necessary we must leap over the pitfalls to avoid activating them ourselves.

Those positioned overhead e.g. on top of doors must be triggered with our BB gun. Once in Kevin's inventory, simply pressing enter fires it since aiming is automatic.



Pursued by two morally bankrupt crooks you'd think it might occur to Kevin to pop a cap in their bottles directly. And you *can*, though we'll only earn points for the first shot. After which Marv and Harry will merely be hindered to buy us some time to get away. If we're caught it's game over.



WE GOTCHA,
YA LITTLE SQUIRT!!!

Since earning points is the only way to beat the game, you have to make every opportunity count. Each successful hit is worth a varying number of points; it takes the accrual of 50 to incapacitate each perpetrator permanently. I mean, how can you equate a clownified banana skin slip to a scalp-singeing blowtorch attack?

You can check on the whereabouts and health status of Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern (the voice-over guy from The Wonder Years) by glancing at their avatars in the GUI. When in the same room as Kevin they vanish, otherwise the name of the current room occupied is displayed. You'll know when they've stepped into a booby trap as they'll react accordingly. "Ouch, my foot has endured a hurty, I'm gonna kill you, you little *£&#", and so on.



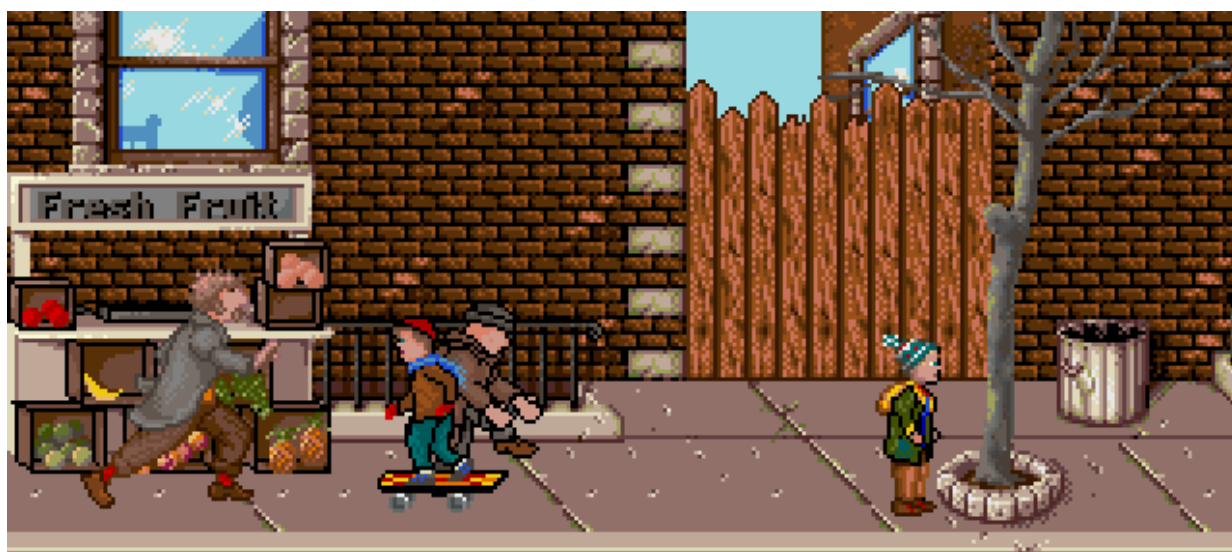
Achieving a rank in the leaderboard is the ultimate reward since that's all there is to chase. You can't go as far as killing your bete noires; this being a PG-rated affair, we must instead settle for strongly 'encouraging' them to wave the white flag.

We should consider our mission successful if we can survive the ordeal without being caught for as long as it takes to mobilise the final trap. Our score is calculated based on the

number of torture devices sprung at the expense of one or other cat-burglaring nincompoop.



If you're craving more of the same (and can free your hands from your straight-jacket), you'll be delighted to know that Manley & Associates produced a sequel in 1992. This time loosely inspired by *Lost in New York*, the structure is identical, albeit a DOS exclusive featuring fresh scenery. Some of it *outside*! Gasp! Oh, and Kevin wears a cutesy-wutesy ickle bobble hat.



Pertinent to *either* of the Home Alone twins, with our initials memorialised in lights there's little reason to replay the games since there will be nothing new to discover. You certainly won't be ensnared by the presentation because it's awful. PD quality pixel art is jarringly 'blended' with jagged digitised graphics, each style accentuating the shoddiness of the other.



Musically it's passable, mostly because the cute little, tip-toeing ditties remind me of the pre-programmed demo routines that came with the £20 Casio keyboard I got from Argos when I was 10 years old. If the toy piano vibe isn't

gelling with your perception of a life-threatening home invasion, luckily it can easily be disabled.



It's a shame the same can't be said of the challenge-free gameplay mechanics that babysit you through the tasks, leaving you with little to do besides admire the scen... oh, never mind. Home Alone's byline should have read, "A family comedy game without the family ...or, erm, *game*". Comedy doesn't make top billing either come to think of it.



When the McCallisters decided to go on vacation, they forgot one very important thing... to recruit a development team who would do justice to the gaming accoutrement to their son's big break in the movie biz. Like Macaulay, I'm demanding a divorce!



...KEVIN!